



Local Land  
Services

# *Aboriginal* **Engagement Strategy**







# Acknowledging Traditional Custodians

Local Land Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future. We also recognise the unique, diverse and enduring cultures of Aboriginal peoples and communities in NSW.

Obligations to care for Country remain integral to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lore, identity, culture and social and emotional well-being. The way in which traditional lands are being managed is of great interest to First Nations communities and Local Land Services understands that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a significant contribution to make in relation to land management in the region.

First Nations peoples hold special knowledge and rights regarding the management of land and its resources. Aboriginal peoples occupied all areas of NSW with evidence including campsites, scarred and carved trees, rock shelters, grinding grooves, rock art, and ceremonial and burial areas present across all landscapes.

Cultural values across NSW may also relate to natural resources such as native bush medicines, foods and tradeable goods including ochre and stone suitable for tool making. Song-lines, storylines and intellectual property concerning traditional knowledge are also acknowledged. NSW holds many Aboriginal cultural heritage values, and the preservation and management of these values are best determined by the Traditional Custodians of Country.

.....

*Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this document may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.*

Artwork by Nikita Ridgeway.

Photo credits: Vera Hong Productions

© State of New South Wales through Local Land Services 2020. You may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute Local Land Services as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to charge others for access to the publication (other than at cost); include the publication in advertising or a product for sale; modify the publication; or republish the publication on a website. You may freely link to the publication on a departmental website.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (September 2020) and may not be accurate, current or complete. The State of New South Wales (including Local Land Services), the author and the publisher take no responsibility, and will accept no liability, for the accuracy, currency, reliability or correctness of any information included in the document (including material provided by third parties). Readers should make their own inquiries and rely on their own advice when making decisions related to material contained in this publication.





## Our strategy

Local Land Services has a vision for vibrant communities in productive, healthy landscapes. We believe that meaningful engagement with Aboriginal people is a key part of achieving this vision.

As an organisation responsible for engaging local communities in landscape management, we believe this creates unique opportunities for Local Land Services to work and walk together with Aboriginal people and other Australians.

This strategy articulates the model for engagement, partnership and opportunities for co-design between Aboriginal people and communities and Local Land Services and is designed to provide an action-oriented approach to enrich relationships, create opportunities and enhance respect for Aboriginal peoples and communities.

The strategy aligns with, and builds on, "Our Place on Country – Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2020-2023" which was co-developed with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Department of Regional NSW, which has a vision "to advance the aspirations of Aboriginal people of NSW through the work of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the Department of Regional New South Wales."

## Principles

Consistent with the Our Place on Country Strategy, the Local Land Services Aboriginal Engagement Strategy has six key principles\*:

- Acknowledge, value and embed Aboriginal cultural knowledge and world views in program delivery and business as usual.
- Respect Aboriginal people's rights, obligations and roles as Traditional Custodians of the land, sea and waterways.
- Promote and strengthen connections to culture and identity.
- Prioritise economic independence for Aboriginal people through increased employment and enterprise development.
- Establish and maintain meaningful ongoing relationships with Aboriginal people and Country.
- Recognise appropriate engagement and connection with Aboriginal people and Country as core to our service delivery.\*



# Why is it so important?

Country is at the core of every Aboriginal person's identity and sense of belonging. It is the place from which Aboriginal language and culture are derived and Aboriginal culture and language groups determine families and kinship.

Aboriginal communities are often very busy prioritising the immediate needs of community within the outer circle of issues. These issues are symptomatic of the dispossession of Aboriginal people's lands and a lack of clear voice and contribution to managing Country.

This strategy will help Local Land Services do a better job of delivering core business, by developing a deeper understanding of Aboriginal communities and integrating this knowledge into our work by creating partnerships based on co-design and collaboration\*.

This strategy supports Local Land Services regional boards in meeting their legislated obligations as required by the *Local Land Services Act 2013* section 29, the Act, in turn, supports the innate desire of the Local Land Services Board and management to undertake meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities.

## Influences

- Our Place on Country – Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2020-2023 – Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Department of Regional NSW.
- Department of Regional NSW Aboriginal Outcomes Plan.
- OCHRE (2013) – Opportunities, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment - NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal Affairs: Education, Employment and Accountability.
- The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy NSW Working Together for a Better Future 2019-2025.
- Reconciliation Australia – Reconciliation Action Plans "Local Land Services Innovate RAP, 2018-2020".
- "Walking in Both Worlds" – Local Land Services Senior Executive Leadership Development Program report.

## Review

Every three years, Local Land Services will report, review and update on Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, achievements, challenges and learnings, to both internal and external stakeholders.



# Enriching relationships



Local Land Services is committed to and accountable for meaningful engagement with Aboriginal peoples and communities across NSW.

Relationships with our customers and staff are founded on mutual respect, trust and integrity.

Our approach to working with Aboriginal people in NSW will be consistent with the principles of self-determination and co-design. Through this strategy, we will continue to develop, strengthen and enhance our relationships to mutually achieve and celebrate cultural, social, economic and environmental outcomes.

## Outcome 1

Aboriginal peoples and communities have greater choice, access and control over their Country and its resources. Local Land Services will collaborate with Aboriginal communities to garner broader respect for Aboriginal cultures through the sharing of traditional knowledge to enhance contemporary land management practices in sustainable productive landscapes.

### Objective 1.1

Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal people, organisations and local communities to further relationships with Local Land Services.

#### Key result

Increase the number of Aboriginal community partnerships and participation within Local Land Services.







## Objective 1.2

Acknowledge Country and participate in and celebrate significant Aboriginal events by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal people and other regional Australians.

### Key result

All Local Land Services business units acknowledge Country as part of all regular events, have welcome to Country at public events and have participated in and celebrated significant Aboriginal events.

## Objective 1.3

Raise internal and external awareness of Local Land Services' Aboriginal programs, to maximise participation and build relationships and partnerships with regional NSW stakeholders and Aboriginal peoples and communities.

### Key result

Increase the number of specific programs that involve Aboriginal peoples and communities and increase participation in existing Local Land Services programs.

# Creating opportunities



Local Land Services is committed to providing an equitable work environment that reflects and celebrates diversity and inclusion. By providing external employment and procurement opportunities, Local Land Services can support Aboriginal people and businesses to encourage, local, regional and remote opportunities across the state.

We aim to develop Local Land Services capacity to respectfully engage with Aboriginal governance structures and ways of working and to support Aboriginal communities in pursuing their aspirations in regional business, natural resource management and beyond.

## Outcome 2

Aboriginal organisations and businesses are supported to succeed and grow NSW's first economy.

### Objective 2.1

Support sustainable growth of Aboriginal-owned businesses and encourage Aboriginal employment by driving demand via government procurement of goods and services.

#### Key result

Aboriginal-owned businesses are to be awarded at least three per cent of the total number of domestic contracts for goods and services issued by Local Land Services.

### Objective 2.2

Support employment opportunities for Aboriginal people to get fulfilling and sustainable jobs within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal-owned businesses.

#### Key result

Increase the number of Aboriginal employment opportunities facilitated by Local Land Services.

# Enhancing respect



At Local Land Services, we are committed to a workplace culture that embraces and promotes mutual respect. We recognise First Nations peoples have the oldest continuous living culture and respect their cultural, spiritual, physical and emotional connection with the land. Local Land Services will continue to collaborate with First Nations communities to garner broader respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through the sharing of traditional knowledge to enhance contemporary land management practices in sustainable productive landscapes.

## Outcome 3

Our Aboriginal workforce increases across all divisions and at all levels as Local Land Services becomes an employer of first choice for Aboriginal people to grow career paths in the public sector, ensure Aboriginal employees feel culturally safe and understand drivers and barriers to employment success.

### Objective 3.1

Dedicated Aboriginal staff attraction, development and retention initiatives to address the need to: increase the overall number of Aboriginal staff employed by Local Land Services and the distribution across business units; and retain staff currently employed. Critical to this is the need to provide holistic support across the whole-of-employee life cycle. Attention will need to be given to the complex web of responsibilities Aboriginal staff have as members of extended families and communities, and the public sector. This is often described by Aboriginal staff as the difficulty of 'walking in both worlds'.

#### Key result

Increase the percentage of Aboriginal employment to a minimum of three per cent across all grade levels in Local Land Services.

### Objective 3.2

Tailored Aboriginal talent management initiatives and capability building for those with an interest in moving into manager and senior executive roles. These initiatives address the need to better support Aboriginal staff in reaching their potential, get Aboriginal staff into the Local Land Services senior executive and ensure all Aboriginal employees have the skills, capabilities, support and experience they need to excel in Local Land Services.

#### Key result

Double the number of Aboriginal executive and leadership roles.



## Outcome 4

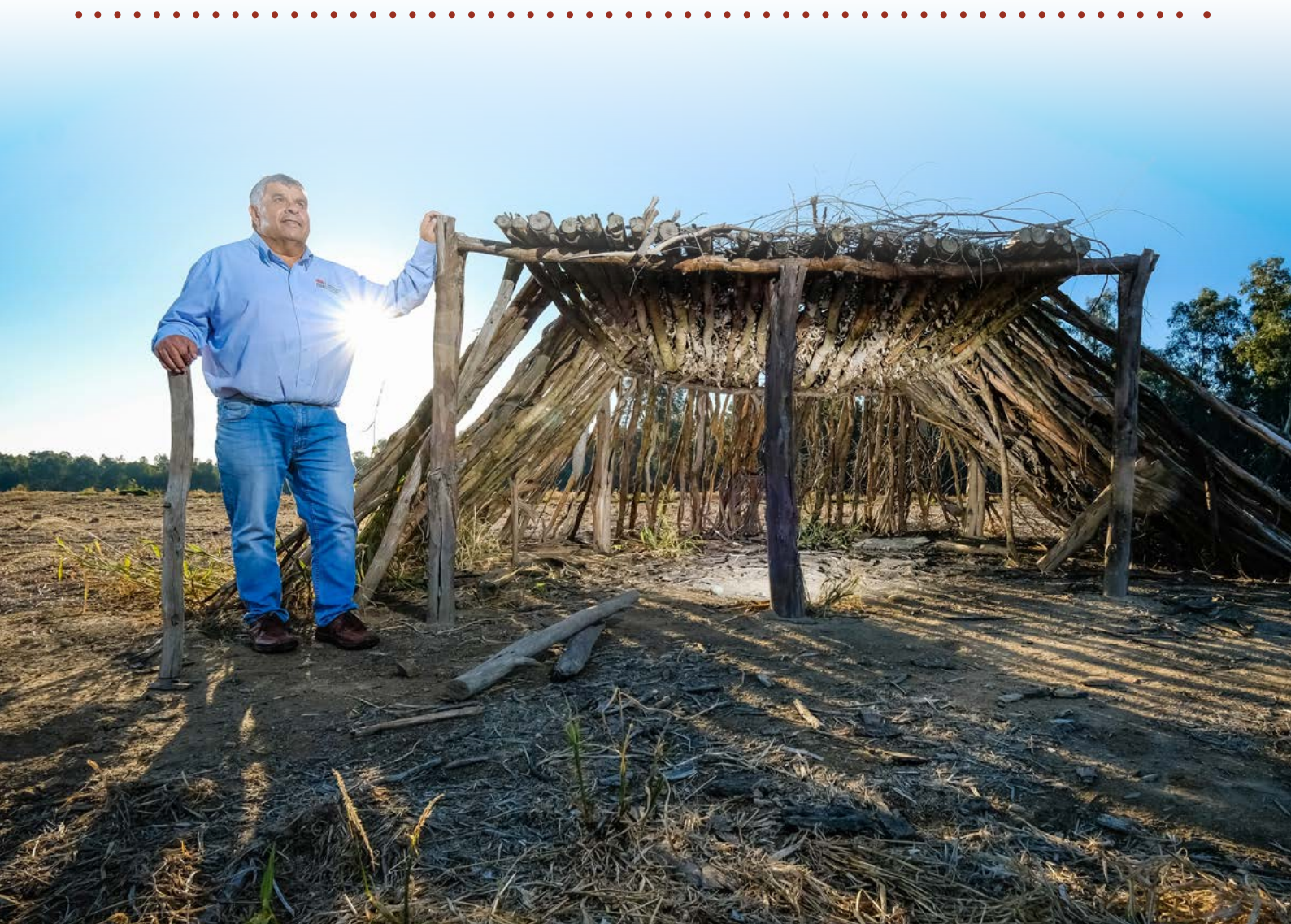
Senior executive, managers and staff are aware and promote the importance of developing responses that address the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples impacted by our work.

### Objective 4.1

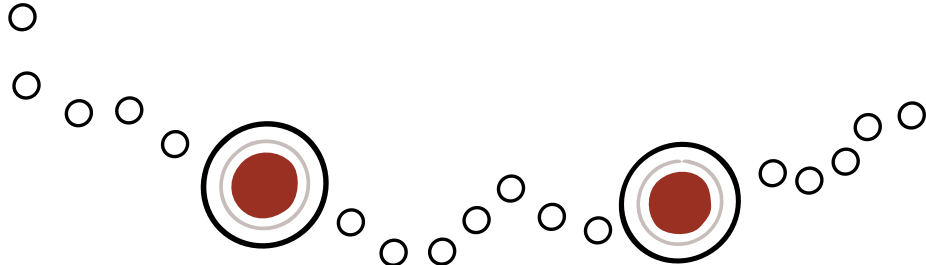
Develop a Local Land Services wide approach to the development of Local Land Services' cultural capability, leveraging efforts already in place within parts of Department of Regional NSW, with a particular focus on the boards, executive and management. Whole-of-department cultural competency initiatives address discrimination experienced by Aboriginal staff and lift the understanding by other Local Land Services staff of Aboriginal culture, in particular by those that manage Aboriginal staff. Aboriginal staff have a strong preference for the program to include cultural immersion and 'on-Country' experiences.

#### Key result

Improve cultural capability, consciousness and safety across our workforce allowing all leaders and staff to reflect on their own knowledge and beliefs about Aboriginal histories and peoples and understand that their beliefs and preconceptions have an impact on the way we engage with Aboriginal people and carry out our roles.





# Action Plan



Local Land Services acknowledges that to successfully embed Aboriginal engagement and cultural knowledge in our business, it will require specific actions and agreed standards across all levels of our organisation. These are outlined below.

Outcome 1	
<b>Statewide actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the number of Aboriginal members on Local Land Services Boards and advisory committees and support improvements to consistency of governance across Local Land Services Aboriginal Community Advisory Groups.</li> <li>2. Ensure Local Land Services meets its statutory obligations to consult when negotiating Indigenous Land Use Agreements.</li> </ol>
<b>Regional actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Ensure all regions and business units have in place a Local Aboriginal Engagement Strategy that outlines its commitment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with local Aboriginal organisations to develop guiding principles to support the development and implementation of Aboriginal community plans and aspirations through Local Land Services programs leading to suitable opportunities to partner with Aboriginal people on programs across Local Land Services.</li> <li>• Identifying opportunities to support and engage Aboriginal people who own and manage land.</li> <li>• Identifying opportunities to increase collaboration with Aboriginal people in the management of travelling stock reserves.</li> <li>• Protecting sensitive and significant sites across all Local Land Services on-ground programs.</li> <li>• Identifying opportunities for Aboriginal people and other land managers to promote, showcase and share traditional and contemporary land management knowledge and practices, including cultural fire practices, while ensuring the protection of cultural rights and knowledge.</li> <li>• Ensuring all Local Land Services Aboriginal staff have the opportunity to participate in and promote significant Aboriginal events, which may include: The Apology Anniversary; Close the Gap Day; NAIDOC Week; National Reconciliation Week; National Sorry Day; and NSW Indigenous Veterans' Commemoration Service.</li> <li>• Ensuring all Local Land Services staff acknowledge Country at all regular events and organise welcome to Country or acknowledgement for public Local Land Services events.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Outcome 2	
<b>Statewide actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Publish guidelines and support each business unit to meet its obligations under the Aboriginal Procurement Policy, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a public commitment that Local Land Services will work with Aboriginal-owned businesses to grow the First Economy of NSW.</li> <li>• Explaining how Local Land Services is working with Aboriginal-owned businesses to identify and develop business and employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Setting measurable targets for Aboriginal participation that Local Land Services will adopt, including where appropriate, targets for specific categories of procurement and Aboriginal workforce strategies.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>



Outcome 3	
<b>Statewide actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Ensure the Local Land Services Workforce Plan includes Aboriginal staff career paths and opportunities to strengthen career mobility and flexibility through location flexibility and offer professional development opportunities for employees. This will be based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of recruitment and induction processes and practices, and staff development programs, tailoring these as needed to suit the cultural needs of Aboriginal employees to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal employees and future applicants participating in our workplace.</li> <li>• Engaging with existing Aboriginal staff and potential partner organisations to investigate options to develop and implement employment pathways including traineeships and cadetships across our key program areas.</li> <li>• Collecting information on our current Aboriginal workforce, including undertaking a quarterly analysis of relevant human resource metrics and exit interview data to maintain effective rates of recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff.</li> <li>• Ensuring all Aboriginal staff are able to access mentoring and coaching support that is culturally appropriate.</li> <li>• Participating in executive pre-qualification programs for grade 11/12 staff.</li> <li>• Developing 'try-before-you-buy' approaches for career progression initiatives to address the lack of confidence that Aboriginal staff face when considering applying for higher-level (executive or non-executive) roles. A 'try-before-you-buy' approach would, for example, allow Aboriginal staff to temporarily work outside of their substantive role and have the opportunity to gain confidence in, and test, their ability to undertake a higher-level role before applying.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Regional actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Ensure the NSW People Matter Employee Survey action plans for each business unit include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for Aboriginal staff to attend and participate in all Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Department of Regional NSW, Aboriginal Support Network events.</li> <li>• Consideration of new ways to promote NSW public sector careers to Aboriginal peoples, particularly in regional areas.</li> <li>• A response to issues identified as adversely affecting the attraction and retention of Aboriginal staff.</li> </ul> </li> <li>7. All Aboriginal staff have a work plan that clearly identifies their career ambitions and support needed to achieve those ambitions.</li> </ol>
Outcome 4	
<b>Statewide actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Ensure the Local Land Services People and Culture Strategy includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A program for cultural capability and trauma-informed workforce training to all employees through a three-stage process that engages local Aboriginal communities where appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stage 1 - mandatory online annual training for all Local Land Services staff</li> <li>– Stage 2 - in-field training to ensure all staff are aware of their legislative responsibilities and due diligence around cultural heritage</li> <li>– Stage 3 - on Country cultural immersion experience.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional development opportunities about Aboriginal cultural safety.</li> <li>• Support for cross-sector Aboriginal networks at all levels.</li> </ul> </li> <li>9. Review current corporate and regional branding of Local Land Services programs and services to identify opportunities to incorporate suitable graphics and designs by Aboriginal artists and appropriately acknowledge artists and stories.</li> <li>10. Ensure business processes in MyLLS reflect and fulfil Local Land Services' statutory obligations to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.</li> </ol>



Local Land  
Services

---

[www.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au)